

## Post-Event Summary Report

**Name of Event:** Mini-Conference on Creativity and Aging in America

**Date of Event:** May 18-19, 2005

**Location of Event:** National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC

**Number of Persons attending:** 44

**Sponsoring Organization(s):** National Endowment for the Arts  
AARP  
The International Music Products Association  
National Center for Creative Aging

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### **PRIORITY ISSUE #1: *Arts and Healthcare***

A growing body of research, specifically the "Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults" by Gene Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Center on Aging Health and Humanities, George Washington University\*, clearly demonstrates that active participation in the arts promotes mental and physical health among older adults living independently in the community; improves the quality of life for those who are ill; and reduces risk factors in older adults that drive the need for long term care. Despite these findings the arts continue not to be considered as part of the solution to the broader societal issues of health and long term living.

\*<http://www.arts.endow.gov/resources/Accessibility/CreativityAgingProgressRep.pdf>

#### **Barriers:**

- The public and healthcare professionals are unaware that arts in healthcare has a high return on investment: it is cost effective and efficient, and has a significant positive impact on patients, older adults and the community.
- There are no mechanisms for evaluating existing models of arts in healthcare programs, or for disseminating information on best practices.
- There is insufficient, sustained funding to support existing best practices that promote interdisciplinary strategies in arts in healthcare.
- Professional artists are underutilized in community-based and healthcare settings.

- There is a lack of public education and information sharing about the benefits of arts in healthcare.
- Healthcare professionals often focus on treating the illness—the “medical model”—and not the patient.
- The definition of “quality of life” is constantly evolving, and the baby boomers are anticipated to have different standards than their parents (i.e., “Beyond Bingo”).
- The infrastructure to support arts in healthcare programs does not exist.
- The current healthcare system is slow to change.

### **Proposed Solution:**

The arts are a national and human resource. Target existing and identify new federal resources for direct investment in programs and public/private partnerships that capitalize on the vast capacity for expression among older adults by increasing their access to and utilization of participatory arts programs in community-based and healthcare settings. Specifically, this means

--investing in quantitative and qualitative research that investigates the value of the arts in promoting health and long term living;

--borrowing, adapting or creating an economic model to quantitatively demonstrate the financial value of integrating the arts into long term care for older adults;

--replicating and broadening the scope of Dr. Gene Cohen’s research (“Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults”);

--enhancing the professional, care giving workforce’s ability to integrate the arts into a comprehensive approach to improved quality of care in our culturally diverse older population;

--using the arts to assist baby boomers in caring for their aging parents and planning for their own needs as older adults;

--evaluating the effectiveness of existing model programs and best practices of how older adults are actively participating in the arts in community-based and healthcare settings;

--increasing and sustaining the number of effective, accessible and low cost programs that incorporate a variety of art forms to promote the health and quality of life of older adults;

--establishing a national clearinghouse of model programs and best practices;

--disseminating model programs and best practices to the public, and federal, state and local decision makers; and

--creating “ArtistCorps” and train members to work with older adults in community-based and healthcare settings.

## **PRIORITY ISSUE #2: *Lifelong Learning and Community***

Recent landmark studies, specifically the “Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults” by Gene Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Center on Aging Health and Humanities, George Washington University\*, demonstrate the benefits of the arts for social engagement, enhancing community life and lifelong learning; thus improving the quality of life and well being of older adults. Lifelong learning in the arts educates and engages older adults as learners and teachers, contributing to individual, community and public life. Despite these benefits, federal, state and local decision makers have not invested in the arts as a way to tap into the cultural and creative potential of older adults.

\*<http://www.arts.endow.gov/resources/Accessibility/CreativityAgingProgressRep.pdf>

### **Barriers:**

- Older adults experience discrimination, which creates intergenerational conflict, an imbalance of community resources and reluctance among federal, state and local decision makers to invest in older adults.
- There are few existing public policies that promote cross-sector or multigenerational partnerships in the community or that support communities.
- Existing research on the benefits to older adults of community and social engagement has not resulted in effective public policy.
- Resources, and the attention of federal, state and local education policy makers have been skewed toward K-12 thus undermining lifelong learning.
- Older artists are not valued as mentors or resources.
- Older adults often have financial and health problems that prevent them from traveling to an educational or cultural institution.

### **Proposed Solution:**

The arts are a national and human resource. Direct funding (e.g., the Older Americans Act) to support lifelong learning in the arts that is essential to developing economically vital and diverse communities, increasing quality of life across the lifespan, and reducing costs for health and long term living. Specifically, this means

--investing in quantitative and qualitative research that investigates the economic and health benefits of lifelong learning in the arts;

--providing incentives to regional arts organizations, state arts agencies and local arts agencies to expand the definition of arts education beyond K-12 to lifelong learning;

--investing directly in programs and leveraging other private and public dollars to advance access to the arts for older Americans;

--mobilizing the public through a social marketing campaign ("selling" ideas, attitudes and behaviors; for example, designated drivers) focused on the importance of creativity throughout life;

--establishing partnerships among the U.S. Department of Education, museums, libraries, higher education and community centers to create new and replicate existing model programs and best practices;

--collaborating with K-12, higher education and community organizations to develop a mentorship program between older artists in the community and students;

--creating an initiative similar to *Staying Sharp*, but focused on lifelong learning in the arts (*Staying Sharp* is an educational initiative to promote cognitive fitness co-sponsored by the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA)—AARP's Educator Community—and the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives.); and

--collecting, evaluating and disseminating to the public and federal, state and local decision makers information on existing model programs and best practices of how older adults are actively participating in the arts and lifelong learning.

### **PRIORITY ISSUE #3: *Universal Design***

Design is both an art form and a science: universal design addresses the right for everyone—from children to older adults—to use all spaces, products and information in an independent, inclusive and equal way. This contributes to livability—a sense of community and of individual worth within the community—throughout the lifespan; improves the quality of life for all so that multiple generations may live and work together; and increases opportunities for aging in place thus contributing to reduced costs of long term care. Despite these benefits the public, and federal, state and local decision makers have not supported or invested resources to connect the business and residential environment with a universal infrastructure.

#### **Barriers:**

- The marketplace is only slowly beginning to appreciate the value of universal design; therefore designers, builders and developers, who respond to the marketplace, are not focusing on the need for universally designed homes, neighborhoods and communities while populations are rapidly aging.
- The public has not demanded that state and local leaders implement policies to make communities livable for all people.
- Funders are not providing sufficient and sustainable resources for the universal design of single-family homes, neighborhoods and communities.
- Universal design is incorrectly perceived to be associated with regulations (mandated accessibility), which makes federal, state and local decision makers reluctant to explore its value.

## **Proposed Solution:**

The arts are a national and human resource. Educate the public, and federal, state and local decision makers about the importance of designing and creating homes, neighborhoods and communities that support choice and livability throughout the lifespan; improve the quality of life for all; and contribute to reduced costs of long term care by expanding opportunities for aging in place. Specifically, this means

--educating designers, builders and developers about the minimal cost of incorporating universal design into new home construction, which is two to four percent of the total cost, as compared to 20 to 27 percent of the total cost to retrofit an existing home;

--encouraging revisions to zoning laws to permit companion units;

--exploring with the banking and mortgage industries innovative housing finance options for older adults such as building or converting existing space into "granny flats" or companion units, which are attached or detached apartments built as additions to single-family homes, or garages converted to apartments;

--encouraging builders of single-family homes and town homes to adopt the EasyLiving Home<sup>(CM)</sup> certification program, which incorporates the following features that increase the sellers' market and offer buyers a home easy for all to live in and visit:

1. At least one full bath on the main floor, with ample maneuvering space
2. A bedroom, entertainment space and kitchen on the main floor
3. Ample interior door widths
4. One stepless entrance (at the front, side, or back of the home, or through the garage)

--disseminating information on existing models of universal design such as the revitalization of Silver Spring, MD and Bloomington, IN; the partnership between AARP and Home Depot to design communities, homes and products that are safer and more user-friendly for older adults; and other best practices identified through the National Endowment for the Arts' universal design initiatives;

--identifying and educating representatives of agencies, organizations, corporations and foundations that fund dependent care programs and facilities in the community on common issues, solutions and resources, and the benefits of community centers as opposed to separate day care and senior centers;

--mobilizing the public to educate for profit businesses, trade associations, government agencies, builders, architects and designers, representatives of the housing industry, and local, state and federal leaders and policy makers;

--turning closed military bases into demonstration models of universally designed communities; and

--creating an innovative assistance program within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (similar to the former HUD 701 comprehensive planning grants) for the planning review of communities to encourage universal design and livability.